

Imagine a philosopher standing at some universal vantage point, and gazing upon the mental and moral pabulum which is daily spread before the countless millions of the world; well might he despair of the future of the race. Witness for example that which passes for truth with the hordes of China and India, of inaccessible Thibet, the tribes of Afghanistan, and the lost wanderers among the desolate wilds of Siberia. Here and there in all this vast moral wilderness he will observe little sparkles of light, with wide stretches of darkness between where the light itself is darkness. Those feeble points, lonely in this wide sovereignty of night, represent the kindling of solitary missionary torches, brilliant and beautiful in the hope and love and faith which they illuminate, but so far as our philosopher can see with his human eyes, as likely to conquer the dense darkness of a thousand generations and a thousand leagues as a lighted match would be likely to dispel the gloom which reigns undisturbed in the depths of the sea. And yet we are to assail this problem of the world's illumination with a perfect and unwavering assurance of complete final victory. Depending absolutely upon the marvelous vitality of truth, and the essential nothingness of untruth, we are to bring in the reign of light, by setting the truth, moral, intellectual, scientific, spiritual, alongside the untruth, and to persevere in it from year to year, from generation to generation, until the recession of truth becomes universal. History shows us plainly that there are periods of reaction against errancy and vanity. The human mind will not forever feed on froth without yielding now and then to the protest which invincibly arises from the remains of God's image in the soul. Some form of error, some doctrines of devils may have its vogue, but the inevitable revulsion comes when the execration of its own dupes replaces their erstwhile blind adulation. This swinging of the human pendulum once and again toward intellectual sanity may seem to our philosopher the operation of nature, but if he will look more closely, he will see that all the while a sane and faithful few have patiently voiced their protest, and borne witness to the truth, and spoken the things which were right, and kindled here and there the divine torch, and it has been this hidden and patient work of faith which has removed the devil's mountain from off the soul of the world, and cast it into the depths of the sea. The hope of the world rests upon the old doctrines, the old Bible, the old virtues, the old righteousness, the old faith, and it is our business to iterate and reiterate ceaselessly these saving truths, and with every form of speech to speak the word of the Lord into the ears of the world, "whether they will hear or whether they will forbear." The word of the Lord was the literature par excellence and supreme for the times of Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and the prophets. Like a stream of light widening and shining more gloriously between vanishing clouds,

this vital literature of the ancient times enriched and illuminated the slow ages with its ever widening revelation of Love and Hope, until today it glorifies the world's widest horizon, and testifies that in its manifold forms, and in all its garments of beauty, adorned with the consecrated gifts of the human mind in every age, and more perhaps of our own than of any other, it is as much the literature for our times as it was for the times which have gone before.

But the question, which more than any other concerns us is, how shall the Brethren church secure a literature commensurate with the sublimity of its available themes, that will bring about a reaction against the frivolous and sensational and impure literature which abounds on every hand. Such a literature cannot be made to order as a suit of clothes is made. It is not manufactured, it is a growth; a development, an evolution. It must grow out of the experience of the human heart, the conscious needs of the soul, the well trained, matured and ripened intellects of men and women who take a wide view of life, whose aspirations are free from the beggarly elements of the world. When Ashland College shall have been well endowed and doing successful work for ten, fifteen, or twenty years, then will the church begin to realize the fruit of the self-sacrifice required to sustain an educational institution. Without intending any reflection on the noble self-sacrificing ministers of the Brethren church whose labors now grace the church and do honor to God, let it be said that before we can have the literature for the times we must have men for the times and before we can have men for the times we must have an educational institution for the times. Slowly but surely, along with the establishment and the continued support of her schools the German Baptist church is building up a literature strong and wholesome, but it is a slow process as all healthy growths are. The Chicago University publishes in connection with its work ten different magazines, monthlies, bi-monthlies, and quarterlies, all the outgrowth of that institution. Brethren, we will make literature as fast as we make schools, and not any faster.

The Bible itself was not made in a day. It did not drop down from heaven in its present form, or any other form, as some suppose. The Lord did not create Adam and Eve, place them in the garden and give them a Bible such as we have today. God did not create a people and then create a Bible for them. That is not the way the world got the literature which is the literature for all times. There was history before there was a Bible. There were nations before there was a Bible. There were human experiences before there could have been a Bible. Forty and six years was this temple in building, and doest thou destroy it and build it up in three days? Sixteen hundred years was this book in making and it stands the eternal rock of gibraltar against all the ravages of time. This Bible, blessed book, is not the product of God alone aside from humanity. Not on-

ly did it grow out of the heart of the great and loving Father, but out of experiences, the triumphs, the successes, and the failures of a nation, a people which God called his own, thru its infancy, childhood, manhood and old age. A Bible made in a day could not be the Bible for all time. Such a book could not touch every phase of human life and human experiences. From the day that the first line of the book was written to the time when God saw fit to close the revelation of his will to men is sixteen centuries. And shall we despair if we fail to build up a strong literature in fifteen or twenty years? The Bible is a divine book, but it is remarkable how much of the human there is in it. It is humanly divine and divinely human. It is the human touched by the divine that brings this book so close to my and your heart.

But meanwhile we can do something toward the establishment of a permanent, healthy literature. We can, if we will, give the church an original, live periodical literature. It is a lamentable fact that the great majority of church papers commit the unpardonable sin of dullness. Equally lamentable is it that a great number of brilliant writers among church members and among ministers commit the unpardonable sin of hiding their talent. I can look from this platform and count a score of such, and I want them to stand with me today, and gaze for a moment upon the vast procession of youth journeying along a highway where there is room for all, eagerly following the illusions of a sensational and godless press, journeying surely away from all the splendid possibilities which God has implanted in our manhood. I want you to look with me upon this vast and universal perversion of the highest and holiest instincts, this pitiable poisoning of the fountains of life, and I want you to realize as I realize, that much of the fault lies in the poverty of wholesome literature, and the inexcusable indifference of those whom God has endowed with the talent of instructive and entertaining religious authorship.

I will close this inadequate discussion of a great theme by thus bringing the matter home to our own consciences. Whatever others may do or fail to do in the corner of the vineyard where God has placed them, no excuse will avail for the neglect of our duty, or for its half hearted and half supported performance. If today the best literary talent in the Brethren church should be sincerely consecrated to the EVANGELIST, to set forth thru that medium in most attractive dress the old doctrines, the old earnestness, the old virtues, the old consecration, the old joy of the Christian life, the old hope of immortality and glory, the old Bible, fountain of light, we would soon have a church paper second to none, and far in advance of great numbers which are more pretentious. We would have a journal to which at least our own youth, for whom we are directly responsible, would eagerly turn, anticipating a feast of good things, of truth dwelling in beauty, like apples of gold in pictures of silver.